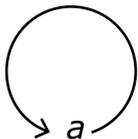


five obstructions



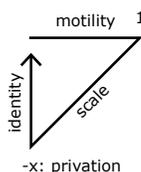
The connection between the \emptyset/β function in cinema and the generic plan behind Lars von Trier's project, *The Five Obstructions*, may not be at first clear. Von Trier imposed five (inexplicably) arbitrary limitations on his colleague, Jørgen Leth, whose original 1967 film, *The Perfect Human*, attracted von Trier's praise as a "perfect film." The obstructions had nothing to do with esthetic standards but, at first, seemed to be impish at best, bullying at worst. But, like *The Perfect Human*, the subtext was encoded beneath/within the presumptuous exterior. And, like the \emptyset/β function, the intention was to pull the viewer/actor/subject into the center of the production. The subject is attracted, bemused, and provoked as if it were some kind of wild and shy animal lured out of its protected lair. The result is not capture (impossible) or exposure (immature, sensational) but "construction." In this sense, *The Five Obstructions* corresponds to Lacan's discourse of analysis, where desire itself is on stage, knowledge is sublated, and the subject is the Other, representing the master signifier, as ideology or, more directly, the unconscious. Our five obstructions are set to keep open the project as collective and dialectical (i.e. non-representational and non-polemical, although representational and polemical components will possibly be incorporated). Beyond the obstructions, there are no instructions — the project is specified "in the negative," so to speak. The project need not be "completed" in the usual sense that a film must be viewable as a film or the paint of a painting must be dry. Each project member must keep or be able to reconstruct a journal that faithfully records the stages of the developing work (this is the first obstruction). These journals must be formalized to a "exhibition standard" — i.e. they should be in a medium that can be put on display or presented publicly (the second obstruction).



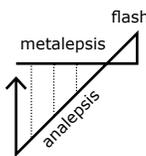
The gap, as \emptyset , is bridged by the "fantasy" of continuity that connects the two static images in the film (or life).



The Möbius band exemplifies the ubiquity of the passage at which the partial object reveals the "internal defect," or R2, of scale dysfunction.



Passage and identity are coupled in the $\langle \rangle$ role of the $\sqrt{-1}$ in functions of scale, extimacy, and non-place location issues.



The anacoluthon suspends the metonymy initially so that metalepsis ultimately is a "metonymy of a metonymy," as in the case of the Nobody as name.

Obstruction 1. Project members must keep a journal documenting the stages of the project. The mode of the journal may draw from seminar models, such as the motif of "between the two deaths," multiple framing (*encadrement*, *chiaroscuro* — frontal or oblique), etc. Journals have only one required standard: they must be displayable in some sense (any medium). This materialization establishes a material base-line for the product: we will have something to experience in some way, and some way to talk about this experience ("critique").

Obstruction 2. The requirement for materialization constitutes the second obstruction. There is no specification of format, medium, duration, etc., but the journals must be about the project in the sense that they are true journals — of stages of planning and execution. The project they describe may be fictional or the actual endeavor of the group. The journal's authors may include fictional beings or not. The modes (realism, oneiric, death-narrative, etc.) may be multiple and mixed.

Obstruction 3. Any project must consider in some form the function of the "pym" — the atom of scale dysfunction idealized by Lacan's *poinçon* ($\langle \rangle$, \diamond) and the resulting effects of extimacy (conversion of inside-outside). References to Poe's encryption technique of chiasmus need not be explicit, but his methods are instructive.

Obstruction 4. Project media, formats, etc. are as unrestricted as the journals, but it is presumed that even a non-existent or unfinished project will be describable as having specific media, formats, etc. A post-card may be sent to or from an imaginary inhabitant on the island of Skye (fictional narrative) but it must be able to describe a film, building, sculpture, construction, installation, etc.

Obstruction 5. Any project must involve in some way one or more of the diagrams on the left of this text. The reference can be literal (shape) or logical (the idea described). Other diagrams and schemas may be used if they relate to the original set in some way. Since all of the diagrams deal in some measure with the Jentschian and Freudian (and Lacanian) uncanny, re-packaging in such forms as Jentsch's Da/Ad, Undead/Zombie formulation can be useful.

Narratives. The provocative thesis about the symmetry between the Passion and Eden in Christian Lore would be an example of a narrative that can be employed at multiple levels. On one level, a fictional figure can be invented as the source of this thesis, and documentation can be, à la Borges, constructed by a third party, who can also be fictional. Chiaroscuro is perhaps the most useful narrative technique, which allows authors to fictionalize what they originally intended to do and bring it to a mysterious, unknown, or catastrophic end. The choice of an ultimate medium to package the series of concentrically contained narratives can imply a $x+1$ level, as if the audience itself has "walked in on" an abandoned work, an "empty house." The Five Obstructions places its indeterminacy, its $\sqrt{-1}$ so to speak, in the center, in the idea of obstruction portrayed in the conversations between von Trier and Leth. It seems that location, in this one case, doesn't matter. The Real is out of place no matter where you find it. Or not.



View, Isle of Skye.